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GEORGE INNESS, N. A.

New York. Reinhardt, Henry & Son.

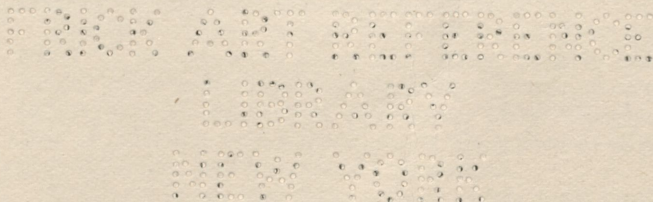
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EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS

by the late

GEORGE INNESS, N. A.

Recently acquired from George Inness, Jr.



Galleries of

HENRY REINHARDT & SON

565 Fifth Avenue

beginning January the Fifteenth

1917

I N T R O D U C T I O N



HE life of a nation is sometimes expressed in the art of a single man as with Rembrandt, or the pathos of a people, as with Millet and the peasantry of France, and so we may say that George Inness has preserved for all time in his art the epic beauty of the swiftly passing forests of America—the pastoral loveliness of her fields, the splendor of her skies—the charm and the tragedy of landscape life here in our land.

Though much has been written, much said, there can never be too much to bring him closer, to give him deeper place in the hearts of Americans, and each new opportunity to study him emphasizes these thoughts and more keenly causes us to know his genius as poet and historian, and his mastery as painter.

Nowhere in all the noble roll of painters of landscape is one with wider range, broader grasp, swifter versatility, or deeper spiritual insight than Inness, and not one has sweeter tenderness. Great claims these, and a very foolishness of words if it were not easy to demonstrate their truth, not in a single canvas, perhaps, but each group of pictures presented to us for study indicates more strongly these claims and the group now offered by Messrs. Henry Reinhardt & Son is such an opportunity, and its full value may be understood only by due contrast with that other group which this firm assembled and which now adorns the Chicago Art Institute as the gift of Mr. Edward Butler.

The Fadden Gift 10/1950

In the present collection we reach an understanding of the man and his methods. We study his slightest sketch—a quick impression in which with unerring vision and touch he registers the salients which produce a picture—or we sit beside him and study, detail upon detail, a scene with which he is concerned and which under his touch becomes as elaborate as a *Hobema* and as broad as an *Inness*—the only possible comparison. Breadth, that singular term which originally may not have had within itself the meaning given when applied to art and which is so frequently used with no real understanding, means with *Inness* the putting aside of the unnecessary—not merely the leaving out, because we have his own comment about this: “I put in the forms in order that I may know how to leave out that which is not needed”; therefore, he intelligently puts aside every detail or item in the forms not needed to express the great idea he is seeking. In this way breadth and simplicity are attained, and we may watch this goal as he attains it, because we see him in all the phases of his study.

There is an elaborate study done with all the care of the painstaking student—a study which shows him learning all that command of the intricacies of out of doors which must be learned completely before mastery is assured, despite much that the young painter of today acclaims. It is a delightful thing to do, also, to put by the side of such a careful study that other study, “*The Model*,” done in later life, where his need was merely the notation—a few tones, a few values—perhaps a contrasting spot, and the thing was complete; but the bigness of the master is there and the canvas of a few square inches holds all of out doors—of season and time of day.

Inevitably comparison must be made between the work of Inness and that of the men of 1830—an idle method of arriving at degrees of excellence, yet some minds are helped by speaking of the delicacy and refinement of Corot, or the energy of Rousseau, and the power of Dupre. The art of Inness is doubtless a descendant of the Barbizon school—but it is something more. He has included all these men in his work.

In the canvas, "The Green Hillside," there is the gray, subtle refinement of Corot—a certainty of sustained tone upon the gray note never surpassed by the French master, but there is a strength that Corot never aspired to: strength in gentleness—an American quality, if you will—and this canvas is significant of it. The address of the attack—the balanced composition—the certainty without feebleness of drawing, and an atmospheric beauty not to be surpassed,—are all present in high degree. No Dupre is stronger and none with greater mastery of sky. Our American mind loves these comparisons—or, more properly, parallels—and the benefit of touching upon the point is to help us stand squarely for our own. Art, wherever found, belongs to the whole world, but an import stamp is not always necessary to tell us that we have masters in painting here in America.

Mastery in landscape painting is almost a conceded excellence in our American school to-day, and the great giant of the group which reaches down to and includes many very young men is avowedly George Inness.

It is not generally known that he was deeply interested in figure painting, nor that he essayed many nude figures. The problem of light upon flesh interested him greatly, and he made many studies from the model, but always, I believe, destroyed the results. He did,

however, do some canvases with figures of considerable size—as in this collection, “The Old Veteran,” witnesses; and any one who has made a real study of Inness must have noted the great skill with which he indicated figures in his landscapes. “The Old Veteran” is pushed further, more carefully worked out as to drawing and details of forms, and is well contained in the landscape—that is to say, is kept in the outdoor value. The figure has the true amount of top light and is interesting to us as an object of prominence in the composition. The child asprawl upon the ground is truly Inness-like in character and in the way it is touched in. The whole figure group seems to be deeply interested in the presence of the Artist, who is not shown, but his sketch-box on the ground is, and at once the observer and the painter are the same. The landscape in this picture has great beauty of tone, and the greens and grays are truly of the master’s touch. It is a picture of unique significance in his work.

Elsewhere I have written of Inness’s ability to paint greens—greens that are full and rich, not tempered or reduced, and nowhere that I remember in the Barbizon work have those painters essayed it, chiefly because in France probably the greens of nature are not so intense. Inness met the problem by a powerful mingling of grays and greens. The eye is comforted by the gray which is the soft top light of out doors, and passing through greens as intense as the chromes, is keyed to the highest consciousness of green as a living color. The extreme modern who uses green merely gives one the effect of green paint—with Inness it is color. The example in the Reinhardt group is distinguished in these very characteristics. Its title, “The Green-wood,” is very happy and suggestive.

Again in this group of pictures we find that mastery over the effects of sun which is well known and beloved. "The Sunburst"—showing at once the daring and the conscious power of the man in causing the sun to shine in mere paint. Seldom may we see finer control of tone, more subtle grasp of values than in this picture. The sun, partly shielded by the screen of trees, bursts through an opening with vivid rays; but it is not here that the mastery of the picture shows, but beyond and to the left—across rich meadows to the dome-like trees and far hills—on into a sky of great beauty. Here is an example of the master rare indeed, and of a most dignified character. It is typical, and the word has the value that it is inclusive,—the summing up of all his qualities.

Another canvas which touches nearly the height of his brush is that superb river scene, "Sunset on the River"—a canvas barely twenty by thirty inches in size, yet suggesting to the eye the full compass of the scene, the heights and depths—the breadth of a gliding river, and over all a noble sky with the glow of sunset time pervading it.

The problem of streams as seen from a height was one that the master delighted in. I remember the composition treated in many ways and with many effects, but rarely so well or so successfully as this picture; and the way he has used the sky line, the glory of the color and the unity of the canvas cause this picture to be distinguished among the many, which will so well repay the consideration of the student, the connoisseur, or the collector.

Yet, if we feel that the mighty genius of such a man as Turner is nowhere shown, we need but to see the two great canvases of Niagara, the one done years

ago and the other but a short while before his death. Those who knew him and the affairs of his life will remember the excitement into which he was roused by the first sight of the great waterfall, the feverish energy with which he made studies, and this earlier canvas is the direct result of those studies and the observation of that time. Of the dignity of the composition, its splendid point of view, there can be no question, and Inness has given it all the power he then possessed. The color is clear, even vivid, and the sense of weight in the falling waters is very fine. The picture was bought by Roswell Smith, Esq., and has remained in the family ever since. The pen of a Ruskin searching for a hook upon which to hang words would make this picture the theme, and garland it with many superlatives. This is not necessary—the picture itself is before us, and even the slightest knowledge of Niagara will enable one to see the drama as Inness expressed it—vast, intense, terrible, yet glorious—a scene of pride for all Americans.

In the later picture he has shown a different mood. The long line of the Falls is set well into the picture plane; beyond is a suggestion of the busy factory life upon the shores, and over all a sky of wondrous knowledge—an Inness sky! And there is that weather-marriage of sky and waters which he knew so well how to do. The very air is moist, and the rising mists enshroud all nature. The color is vibrant and as elusive as an opal—green and fire of the spectrum, and the froth of churning waters. Looking upon the picture with any sort of detachment, one finds himself holding the breath, and listening to the roar of tragic nature.

So then this new Reinhardt group of Inness pictures reaches from the simplest of sketches, of a hand's breadth in size, to the terror of a cataclasm—from the music of bird song to the stupendous roar of nature. After seeing them, we must once more proclaim the presence of a master second to none—a genius at once gentle and vast.

—ELLIOTT DAINGERFIELD.

C A T A L O G U E

No. 1

THE SUN-BURST

Size: 32 x 42 inches

A noble example, fully described in the text. The beautiful and scientific designing of this picture is the equal of any that he has left us.

No. 2

THE GREEN-WOOD

Size: 32 x 42 inches

A powerful canvas, painted in 1893, at the height of the artist's career—amply described in the text.

No. 3

✓ THE OLD VETERAN

Size: 35 x 44 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches

A fine example of Inness's figure work, and a landscape of uncommon strength. The picture is noted in the text.

No. 4

GREEN HILLSIDE

Size: 20 x 30 inches

One of the most complete canvases in the group. The rare drawing everywhere in the picture makes a veritable treasure. Fully noticed in the text.

No. 5
MEDFIELD OAK

Size: 16 x 24 inches

A beautifully drawn red oak in the right foreground—with a perspective filled with interest. The whole landscape under a delicately modulated sky.

No. 6
THE APPLE TREE

Size: $17\frac{1}{4}$ x $17\frac{1}{4}$ inches

An idyl of the Spring time as delicate in color as the blossoms of the trees. The very breath of Spring is in the air.

No. 7
THE WOOD-CHOPPER

Size: $25\frac{3}{4}$ x 21 inches

An exceedingly interesting example with the figures. The old negro, the child, and the log are touched in with a magic that is very fine.

No. 8
THE WIND STORM

Size: 12 x 18 inches

A canvas so lovely in the adjustment of the tones of russet and green and blue that an artist might dream in its presence.

No. 17
THE GATE AT ALBANO

Size: $9\frac{1}{2} \times 13\frac{3}{8}$ inches

A study in the vicinity where so many of his lovely Italian things were painted. The tree forms and the sky line are especially to be noted.

No. 18
THE ELM TREE

Size: $11\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{7}{8}$ inches

A warm, mellow study, with the beautiful drawing of the Elm—a tree that Inness loved and used frequently in his pictures.

No. 19
THE MODEL

Size: $5\frac{1}{4} \times 8\frac{3}{8}$ inches

A rapidly touched in sketch with all the brilliant assurance of a master.

No. 20
THE END OF THE BARN

Size: $5\frac{5}{8} \times 9\frac{3}{8}$ inches

A study with beautifully modulated greens—and has one or two figures delicately touched in.

No. 21
THE FALLS IN '93

Size: 44 x 69 inches

In this picture Inness has drawn the line of the great cataract straight across the canvas—the vivid, changeable color of the foreground supporting the greys of the distance—the line of buildings against the sky and the rainbow in the mist—making a most remarkable canvas.

No. 22
NIAGARA FALLS

Size: 48 x 72 inches

This is the great "Niagara" painted for Roswell Smith, Esq., in 1884. It shows the great falls from a point which gives the two Falls very dramatically. In the foreground a great cool shadow rests, while the center is filled with the mists of the broken waters. The color is cool—even opaline—and the whole canvas is instinct with intense dramatic power.

No. 23
EVENING ON THE RIVER

Size: 20 x 30 inches

The golden beauty of this canvas is not surpassed by the work of any other artist, and equalled by very few in the long roll of Inness sunsets. The glow of the sky is superb, and the further bank of the stream is wrought with the magic touch of the master. The water catches just the right amount of sky-reflection, and the eye is fascinated with the beauty of the sky line—together a noble canvas.

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